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Gazette

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will make
their **mark**
on town

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DALE FARCE

 Travellers cling
on at disputed
site amid legal
disagreement

Sam Smith

sam.smith@gazettenews.co.uk

THE EVICTION of travellers from Dale Farm plunged into farce this week. A High Court judge ruled to postpone enforcement action, originally scheduled to begin last week, following the emergence of discrepancies in the enforcement notices handed out at the site in Crays Hill by Basildon Borough Council.

Walls, gates and fences were not included in the notices, meaning they would have to remain on the site.

There is also uncertainty surrounding the legal definition of a caravan and what areas of hardstanding can remain on site. This means there cannot be a complete site clearance, as had been intended.

Pressure

To further pile on the pressure, travellers have indicated they are preparing fresh planning applications for Dale Farm following any site clearance.

The delay is said to be costing the council millions of pounds.

However, an eviction could still take place tomorrow after an application for a judicial review from the travellers is heard in the High Court.

While travellers and their supporters have been revelling in the latest legal victory, residents in Crays Hill have pledged to take their own action if the law is not upheld, with one resident describing the community as a "village on Prozac".

Dale Farm special report:
Pages 2-7



DEFIANT: Traveller spokeswoman Kathleen McCarthy described the court ruling as a 'victory'

Teenager arrested in school gun scare

A TEENAGE boy was arrested following a gun scare at a Wickford school.

Police were called to The Bromfords School shortly after 2.30pm on Tuesday, September 20, after reports from a student that a boy had a weapon outside the school.

The boy was said to be carrying a gun and a knife, although Essex Police has since confirmed he was not carrying a weapon.

Staff locked the school gates on the advice of the police and pupils were kept on the premises until it was safe to leave, at about 3.20pm.

Lisa Ingram, 45, from Grange Avenue, said she was worried for the welfare of her son who attends the school.

Alarms

"We could hear the school alarms going off," she said. "We were all thinking of a massacre and we all wanted to get our kids out."

Teachers ushered pupils into the sports hall and the hall, where they were supervised by staff.

Ms Ingram added: "There was no phone signal in the sports hall so we didn't know what was going on."

A 14-year-old boy, not thought to be a pupil at the school, was arrested and charged under the Malicious Communications Act. He has been released on conditional bail to appear at Basildon Youth Court on Tuesday.

Head teacher Maria Spinks said: "Students are absolutely paramount to us and staff remained with students at all times. Students were advised of the reason for the action taken."

"Once advised it was clear to exit the school and students were dismissed."

Mrs Spinks thanked students, parents and their patience.

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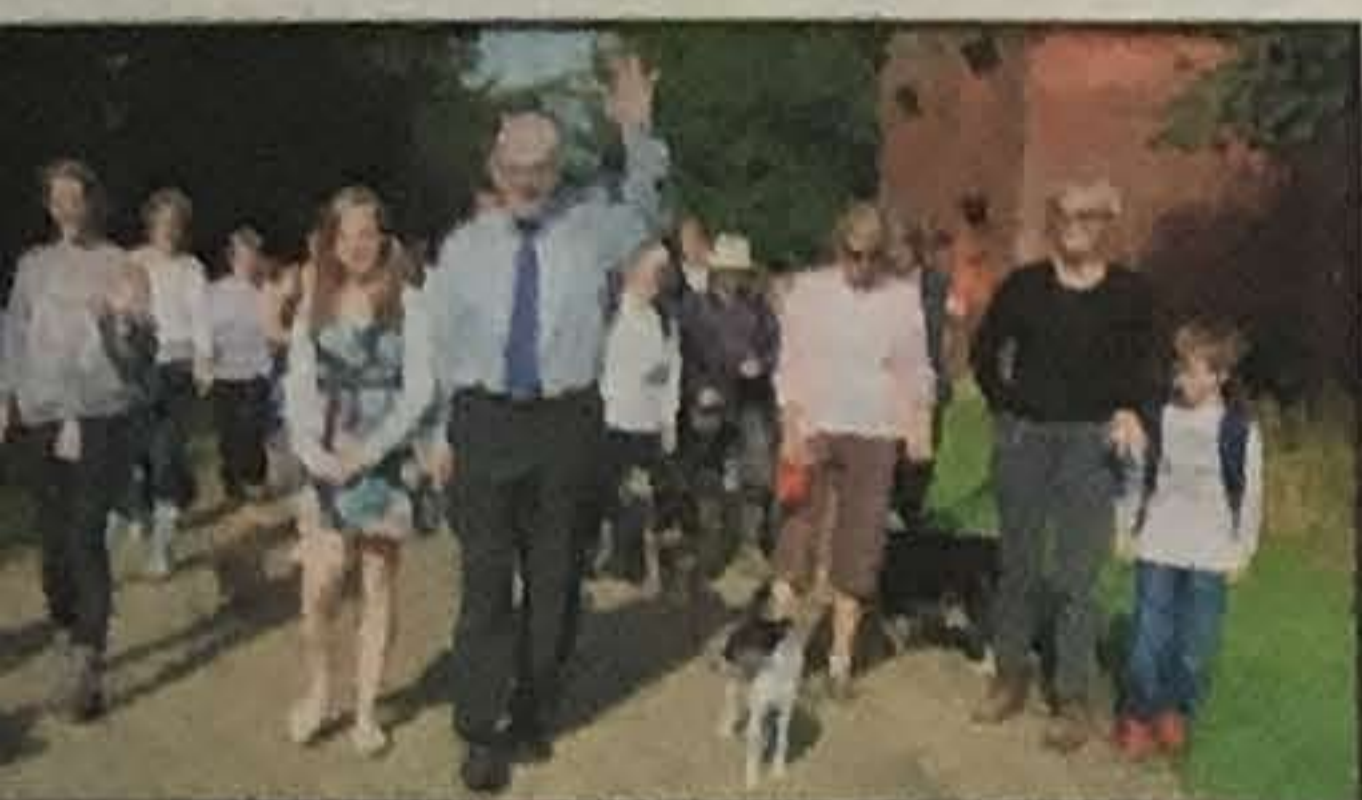
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Travellers win temporary reprieve
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tions

1970

Basildon council allows around 40 English
Romany families to live on a site next to a scrap
yard in the village of Crays Hill

1982

A change in green belt extends its limits from
London towards Southend, taking in Crays Hill for
the first time

1992

A series of plots in Oak Lane are given permission
by the council

Court gives the gypsies another few days until next hurdle

Technical details to be heard

Sam Smith

sam.smith@gazettenews.co.uk

AN AIR of muted celebration swept through Dale Farm as a High Court judge granted travellers a few days of respite pending more legal hearings.

The new delays hinge on technicalities within the enforcement notices from Basildon Borough Council, which call into question aspects of the operation and mean that a complete site clearance is unlikely.

However, far from being an indication that the eviction will not take place, the extension to the injunction, first handed to travellers on Monday last week, is to resolve what structures bailiffs can remove from the site.

It has emerged that the enforcement notices handed to travellers by the authority did not mention the removal of walls, fences and gates from the six-acre site in Crays Hill.

Mr Justice Edwards-Stuart, who is ruling on the case at the High Court, said: "It is unclear why the council did not include unlawful walls, fences and gates in the enforcement notices."

Another issue was the definition of chalets and caravans at the site.

It was unclear if the enforcement notices applied to both chalets and caravans, which differ in definition.

The enforcement notices require the removal of caravans from the site, but some travellers claim their homes are "twin-unit" caravans and do not therefore fall within the meaning of the enforcement notices.

The impact of the legal disputes is that it looks increasingly likely that there will not be a complete site clearance of Dale Farm.

Hearing

A hearing on Monday will determine the nuances of the enforcement notices, although eviction could take place from tomorrow after travellers present an application for a judicial review.

The travellers' legal case is being funded in part by legal aid with lawyers acting pro bono and others on reduced fees.

The continued delay is costing the council a significant amount of money, potentially millions of pounds.

Giving his reaction to the court's decision, leader of Basildon Council Tony Ball said: "Today was another

LEGAL BATTLE:
Candy Sheridan, Dale Farm travellers' representative, addresses the media outside the High Court
Photo by Oli Scarff/Getty Images



day when the wheels of justice continue to grind slowly forward.

"We will be back in court on Thursday after which we fully hope to be in a position to commence removing residential structures."

"Outstanding technical issues, such as fences and gateposts, will be dealt with separately next Monday."

"The judge made it clear from the outset that such was the importance of this case that justice needed to be seen to be done. After ten years, if we have

to wait a few more days to follow due process and get things right, that is what we will do."

Travellers have called on the council to recommence negotiations.

Campaign group Dale Farm Solidarity called for a "common-sense approach".

Several high-profile figures have offered to mediate discussions, including the Bishop of Brentwood Thomas McMahon and Bishop of Chelmsford Stephen Cottrell.

Views: Clock is counting down but for how much longer?

THE steps of the High Court must be as familiar to traveller families now as the steps of their own caravans.

The building has also become a second home to those members of Basildon Borough Council turning up to every hearing, trying to make a case that they felt was watertight.

Unfortunately, somewhere along the line it sprang a leak, and now it seems the whole ship is at risk of sinking.

There is a general insistence that a clearance must go ahead, and that the court room wranglings are only delaying the inevitable.

Even the judge has declared that this is not an indefinite stay of execution.

Gazette comment

But the devil, as always, is in the detail, and sorting out the mass of technicalities in this case seems like hellish work.

There are the differences between caravans and chalets, and caravans and double caravans, and doubts over the protected status of fences.

Legal brains are no doubt working themselves to the brink of exhaustion trying to solve each individual dilemma, while the rest of the country looks on and wonders

how a planning dispute could come to this.

Some blame the council for not making sure their case was bulletproof before they went ahead with the operation.

But surely, if they had had any doubts, the diggers wouldn't have turned up in the first place.

No one is more infuriated by the delay than the council, except perhaps the residents who are desperate for a resolution.

They know that the council is doing all it can, but wonder whether what it can do will be enough.

The travellers have pulled off more close shaves than Sweeney Todd, and the whole saga has more twists and

surprise turns than the pulp stories that the demon barber stepped from.

But some stories are stranger than fiction, and there is surely no audience that would suspend their disbelief long enough to accept all of this.

What is clear is that there must be a resolution, before patience – and money – runs out.

A few days more after ten long years may not seem like much in the grand scheme of things, but for the people involved, every minute counts.

And as they tread up the all-too-familiar steps to the High Court, they will all feel the clock counting down.



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1996

The scrap yard off Oak Lane is sold by landowner Ray Bocking to traveller families

2001

A series of planning breaches at the site are challenged by the council, which issues eviction notices. The travellers immediately appeal

2003

The Government dismisses the appeals, but it extends the compliance for a further two years

June, 2005

Basildon council decides that direct action is needed to remove the travellers from Dale Farm

The key players



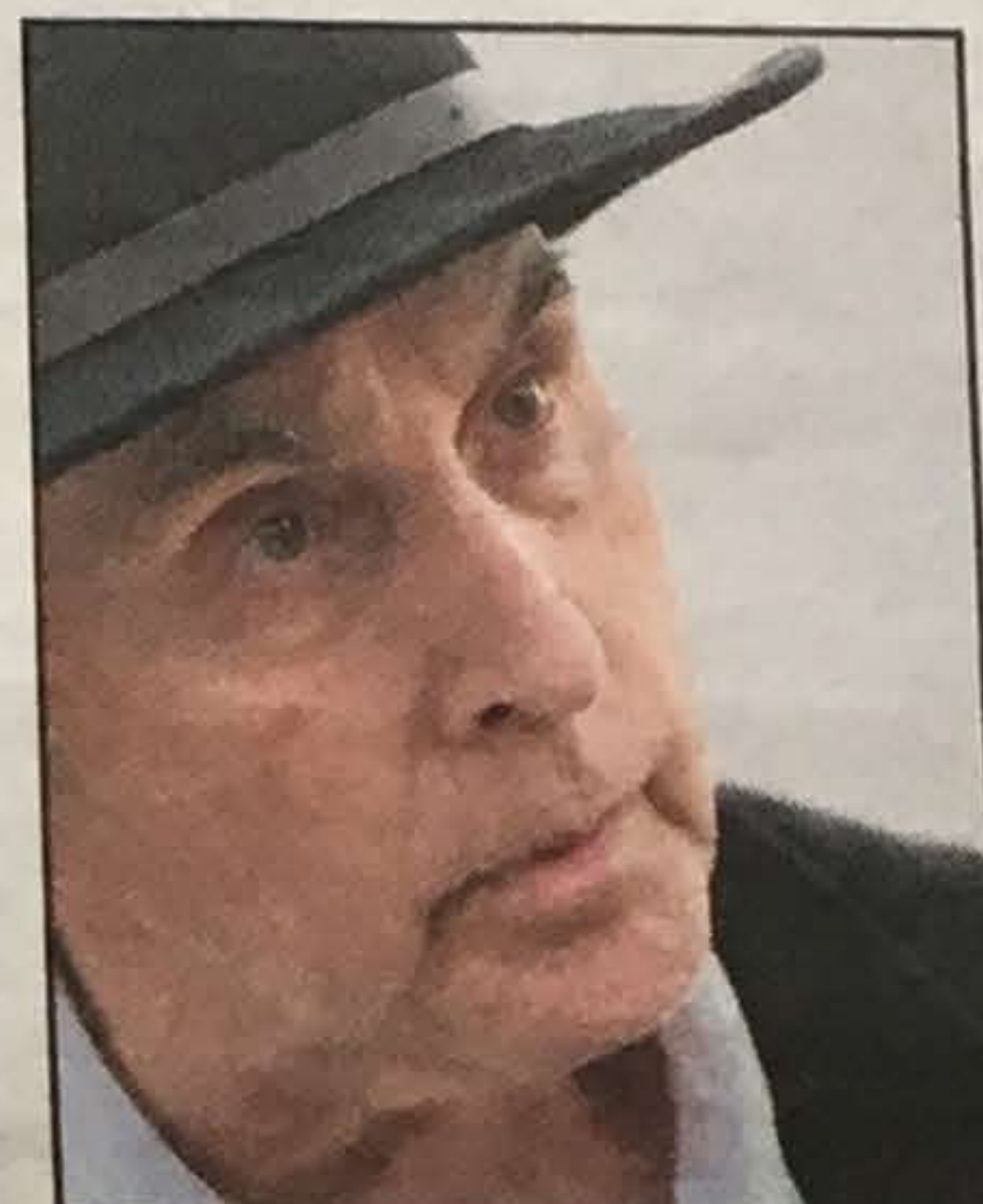
■ Tony Ball is the leader of Basildon Borough Council. Mr Ball has been a councillor for 13 years and council leader for the last two years.



■ John Baron, MP for Basildon and Billericay, has been heavily involved in negotiations and was on-site during the first eviction attempt last week.



■ Oak Road resident Len Gridley has been a vocal supporter of eviction and claims he has received death threats and abuse from gypsies.



■ Grattan Puxon said this would be his "last big fight". The ex-journalist has spent years fighting for gypsies and has written about their history.



■ Candy Sheridan, vice-chairman of the Gypsy Council, was instrumental in getting a last-minute injunction stopping the eviction last week.



■ Richard Sheridan, former president of the Gypsy Council, has travelled as far as the European Parliament to fight for rights for travellers.

Villagers: 'the point is they are breaking law'

CRAYS Hill residents have pledged to take action of their own if the law is not upheld at Dale Farm.

Residents met last night to discuss the possibility of a protest march should a site clearance at Dale Farm not take place.

Travellers and their supporters have called for Tony Ball, leader of Basildon Borough Council to resign, but Councillor Andy Peake, chairman of Ramsden Crays Parish Council, said he is not to blame.

"This has nothing to do with Tony Ball. I support him 100 per cent," he said.

"If there's a criticism it's the judiciary. We're becoming a laughing stock.

Lawyers

"It has taken ten years to sort out a local planning dispute - what other country would put up with that? The only winners from this are the lawyers."

He added: "We live from day to day - the whole thing is affecting everybody. There is a terrible feeling in the village, the tension is unbelievable. It is a general feeling of despair.

"At some stage common sense and justice will prevail. If we lose this battle, every village will be vulnerable to the



SCRUM: Media mob Dale Farm resident Kathleen McCarthy after the ruling

same dark cloud we are living under."

Ray Goss, 65, has lived in the village for 32 years. He said: "It's just the travellers trying to play for time. We can blame the council to a certain extent or you can blame the judge.

"At the end of the day it doesn't matter if they are travellers or Martians, the point is it is green belt and they are breaking the law.

"Why has it taken so long? How many of these injunctions do we have to have before anybody does anything?"

There was talk of residents withholding council tax if the eviction does not take

place. Moira Goss, 61, said: "It is not anything to do with who they are. This is the council and the law that has let everybody down and let it get out of hand."

The mood at Dale Farm could not have been more different, but travellers are aware they still face eviction.

Traveller spokesman Grattan Puxon said gypsies are preparing fresh planning applications following any eviction action.

He said: "The ruling means there will never be a complete clearance. How much will be left is still unclear until the judge rules what can and cannot be removed."

Applications

Once it is clear what hardstanding remains at the site, Mr Puxon said gypsies will submit planning applications.

Dale Farm resident Kathleen McCarthy described the court ruling as a "victory".

"If half is staying there will still be an eviction because the other half is not going to go out the gate when we have not got anywhere to go. Now we know the council has been wrong in some parts. It is time for it to take some of the blame."

State of site raises concerns

CONCERN has been raised about what state Dale Farm will be left in following any enforcement action.

The council carried out an eviction of seven plots at neighbouring Hovefields Drive in September last year, where the land has since become a rubbish dump.

Councillor Tony Ball, leader of Basildon Borough Council, told the Gazette that the council "would have done more with Hovefields if we had

more resources".

Regarding Dale Farm, Mr Ball said the land will be secured and access will be restricted.

Traveller spokesman Grattan Puxon said: "Hovefields is an awful mess. We won't get our green belt back at Dale Farm, and we are not getting a complete site clearance.

"We would like the council to come to the negotiating table to find a common sense solution."

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The decision to remove the travellers and clear the site is reconsidered, before being reaffirmed by the council

February, 2008

A judicial review into the council's decision begins, with the High Court finally deciding any clearance would be unlawful

January, 2009

The High Court ruling is overturned by the Court of Appeal, allowing the clearance to go ahead

June, 2009

Travellers attempt to have the decision overruled in the House of Lords, but the case is refused

Actions will speak louder than words

Bailiffs with a key role to play in saga

Gazette reporters

editorial@gazettenews.co.uk

EASILY spotted but rarely heard, bailiff firm Constant & Company in their blue vests are key players in the Dale Farm saga.

The company was founded in 1973 by Bryan Constant, a former police detective, and they still boast of having a large number of former policemen on their staff.

It offers civil and High Court enforcement, stating: "Our clients are generally solicitors, local authorities and commercial landlords, but whether it is a small or large client we offer a personalised service when it is needed."

Constant & Co advertises services from tracking down missing people to surveillance on fraudsters and cheating spouses.

Rent collection is another area where the firm claims great success: "Landlords are regarded by some tenants as charitable institutions."

"On industrial estates and business parks, we have found that a judicious application of distress at one rented unit can quickly prompt other tenants to clear their rent debts. The firm-handed approach is sometimes necessary and we always hold it available."

This firm-handed approach carries over to one of their most lucrative lines of work – clearing travellers from illegal pitches.

Unwanted

In a section on the firm's website, headed "Travellers", they state: "Constant & Company is employed nationally on a daily basis to recover possession of land from unwanted trespassers."

"We believe we are the most experienced, professional and busiest company in this type of work."

In September 2010, it cleared seven pitches at Hovefields Drive in Wickford, where two protesters were arrested for breaching the peace. On September 19, the sup-

posed start of the eviction, managing director Bryan Lecoche led a group of bailiffs to the gates of Dale Farm to ask them to clear their obstructions and move off.

Through a loudspeaker, he said: "In the interests of health and safety, is there anything I can say or do that will persuade you to move yourselves in an orderly manner?"

Perhaps his views were better summed up in 2006, when he was quoted in The Economist at a time that Dale Farm was previously threatened with eviction.

He said: "I've got nothing against travellers, they are our stock in trade, but what is the contribution made by travellers to this country. They don't pay income tax, they want everything for themselves without giving anything back."

They may not be as outspoken as the travellers or protesters but the bailiffs' actions will undoubtedly speak louder than words.

A daily reminder of living in the media spotlight

DRAPED above a barricade at the entrance to Dale Farm was a banner that read "The world is watching you".

With journalists from as far away as Australia at the site and several TV helicopters whirring above it last week, there was little doubting the huge media interest in the story.

Protesters have harnessed the use of social media sites like Twitter and Facebook to broadcast their campaign to the world, but media access to Dale Farm itself is tightly controlled.

On the one hand activists are keen for media to be on-site to tell the travellers' story and make sure the bailiffs and the council are held to account during enforcement action.

On the other, some parts of the media are forbidden on-site, having upset travellers with their reporting of the story.

The makers of the documentary My Big Fat Gypsy Wedding were reportedly removed from the site when they tried to film several weeks ago.

"It has been tremendous how many people have picked up on the story," said protester Jessica.

"But some stuff has been ludicrous. The stuff written about travellers owning land in Ireland really upset them."

During the first eviction attempt last week, ITV reportedly hired an entire field behind Dale Farm to be used as a base for their media operation.

BBC and Sky News hired elevated platforms in a neighbouring garden to provide a vantage point.

The Sun sent in an undercover reporter posing as an activist last week, and the Gazette's Sam Smith camped for two nights before the scheduled eviction date of the September 19.



Main entrance road



Bailiff encampment



Legal site

Authorised travellers' site known as Oak Lane, which gained planning permission between 1992 and 1996. The Oak Lane site provides 34 legal pitches.



Barricade



Barricade

Protesters drawn from far and wide

THE PROTESTERS at Dale Farm have become an integral part of the story in the last month.

They have been vilified in some quarters of the media as anarchists and "a rag-tag bunch of feckless posh kids" (The Sun), but like them or loathe them, they have had an unquestionable influence on the situation at the Crays Hill site.

Some "masked up" to protect

their identity, others chose to show their faces to the world.

Some came from neighbouring areas, others from as far away as Sweden and Germany.

There is no archetypal protester at Dale Farm.

They are a disparate group united by a shared cause – to support the travellers.

"It has been a massive coming together of supporters from dif-

ferent places," said 35-year-old protester Jessica, who is no stranger to activism.

"My heart strings get torn open when there's human injustice."

"I'm opposed to people being treated as less valuable just because of where they are from."

"What are we doing that people are being treated like this? Why is there nowhere [the travellers]

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September, 2010

Seven plots at Hovefields Drive in Wickford are cleared by Basildon council with bailiff firm Constant & Company

February, 2011

The Gazette is given exclusive access to crunch talks in Westminster between the travellers, the council and Billericay's MP John Baron

March, 2011

A packed council meeting in the Towngate Theatre in Basildon pledges £8 million for the clearance, with up to £10 million to be spent by the police

July 4, 2011

Eviction notices are served on Dale Farm, giving travellers until midnight on August 31 to leave the site



Bailiffs' announcements



Front gate



Barricade

Illegal site

Dale Farm is a six-acre plot in the green belt. Since 2001 Basildon Borough Council has been fighting a legal battle to evict travellers. There are 51 illegal pitches at the Crays Hill site.



Barricade



Camp Constant



Watch tower

who have become united by a shared cause

can go legally?" There had been rumours of tension between travellers and protesters, something that Jessica rejects.

She said: "We have all rallied together. We are following the lead of the residents."

"We have worked hard to listen to the residents, we have built up trust and we have made friends."

The vegan kitchen at Camp Constant has been churning out an array of meals to keep people nourished.

Claire Fletcher, 34, from Manchester, arrived at the site last Sunday.

"Everyone wants to work together," said Claire.

"One day you will be chopping veg, then building scaffolding and then answering the

media phone, all in one day.

"You get to learn a lot of new skills."

Birmingham student, Pete Duffield, 19, is more in keeping with the image people hold of protesters.

He is scruffy in appearance but willing to talk and show his face to the media, unlike many at the camp, who hide behind masks.

"For me I felt like this was something not a lot of people were standing up to," he said, "particularly as it's a community that has been so ostracised by society."

The student, who is staying in a chalet on-site, has been at Dale Farm for the past month and says that he will stay until he is evicted or the travellers win.

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August 27, 2011

"Camp Constant" is set up by activists arriving at Dale Farm to try to halt the clearance. They build barricades and pledge to monitor any eviction

August 31, 2011

The eviction notice expires, with little change in Dale Farm. Although some families have left, dozens of supporters have swelled the numbers

Sept 10, 2011

Travellers and their supporters march through the streets of Wickford to Dale Farm to insist they will not be moved

Sept 19, 2011

On the proposed day of the clearance, the media gather at the gates but by 5pm an injunction has been granted, preventing any action

Crays Hill: A history

CRAYS Hill was mentioned as far back as the Domesday Book, and has always been associated with travelling people.

Originally it was part of a manor of two hides and 30 acres (270 acres in total).

At the time, it belonged to Odo, Bishop of Bayeux, and Ralph, brother of Ilgar.

The manor of Ramsden Crays belonged to Simon de Crei, or Cray, in 1262, and passed to the Liston, Tyrell, Walton and Hopkins families.

The manor of Tiled Hall was formerly held by the Bohnun, Vere, and Cheve families, and afterwards passed to the same owners as the capital manor. It is mentioned in White's Directory of Essex in 1848, which described it as "a small village near the confluence of two sources of the River Crouch, two miles east south east of Billericay".

There were then 282 villagers with 2,260 acres of fertile land.

At the turn of the 20th century, Crays Hill village was known for providing refreshments to travellers heading further afield.



Gypsy invasion has ruined our tiny community

Villager hits out at effect of Dale Farm



BIRD'S EYE VIEW: Dale Farm in 1992 when it was a scrap yard

Joshua Farrington

joshua.farrington@gazettenews.co.uk

AS YOUR typical small village in south Essex, Crays Hill has everything you might expect it to have.

On the main road through Crays Hill, leading between the towns of Billericay and Wickford, you pass a park, a church hall, a village shop, a garage, a pub and a school.

There is little to distinguish it from dozens of other rural communities dotted around the county, except for one difference - it is also home to the largest illegal gypsy site in Europe.

Tucked away down Oak Road, a single track lane hemmed in by mature trees, most visitors to the village wouldn't even know it was there.

It is only in the past few weeks that the community has become the centre of a media storm, as Basildon council has sought to remove the Irish traveller families living at Dale Farm.

While the focused glare of the national and international press has only been fixed on the village since the eviction notices were pinned up, the issues surrounding the controversial site have been in place for much longer.

In the 1970s, a group of 40 English Romany families were given permission to move onto a plot next to a scrap yard.

Breaches

It wasn't until 1996 that the scrapyard closed down and owner Ray Bocking sold the land to traveller families, who soon began to use the site as a place to live.

By 2001, planning breaches were reported at the site, and by 2005 the council agreed to take action against the developments, but it has taken years to come this far in the process.

Settled families say the village has changed in the years since the travellers moved in.

Sally Aungier, who has lived in the village since 1984, said: "At times Dale Farm has doubled the size of the village."

"You don't need to be a brain



PRESS FRENZY: Both villagers and Dale Farm travellers are having to cope with a daily media circus surrounding the eviction



TYPICAL VILLAGE: Crays Hill was mentioned in the Domesday Book

surgeon to see how it has affected the village.

"It has affected our community, our school, just about everything in a community way of life. It has ruined our community."

Commentators often speak about the clash of cultures that Dale Farm represents, but for Mrs Aungier, the stand-off is clear.

"In favour of building up one community you are destroying the other," she said. "The activists don't realise what they are playing with."

Indeed, the debate has swamped the entire village.

"Crays Hill has become about the legal and illegal sites. We are out of the equation."

Nowhere is this more explicit than in Crays Hill Primary School. While it used to have upwards of 160 pupils, that dropped as low as 50 when traveller families began sending children there.

The school, which achieved a "good" rating at its last Ofsted

inspection in 2009, now has 110 pupils on its books, of which 107 are believed to be travellers.

Many have special educational needs, often coming from illiterate backgrounds.

Since 2005 an array of legal challenges have pushed back the date of resolution a number of times.

Ignored

Several deadlines were put forward as a date for eviction before notices were finally handed out in July, telling the travellers to leave by the end of August.

With that date ignored by many, the scene was set for a final showdown.

While it is still unclear quite how Crays Hill will be thought of in the future, Dale Farm will always figure large in any history of the village.

While you may not see it from the main road alongside the shop, the pub, or the school, its presence will always be felt.

Havering College Admissions & Enrolment 2011

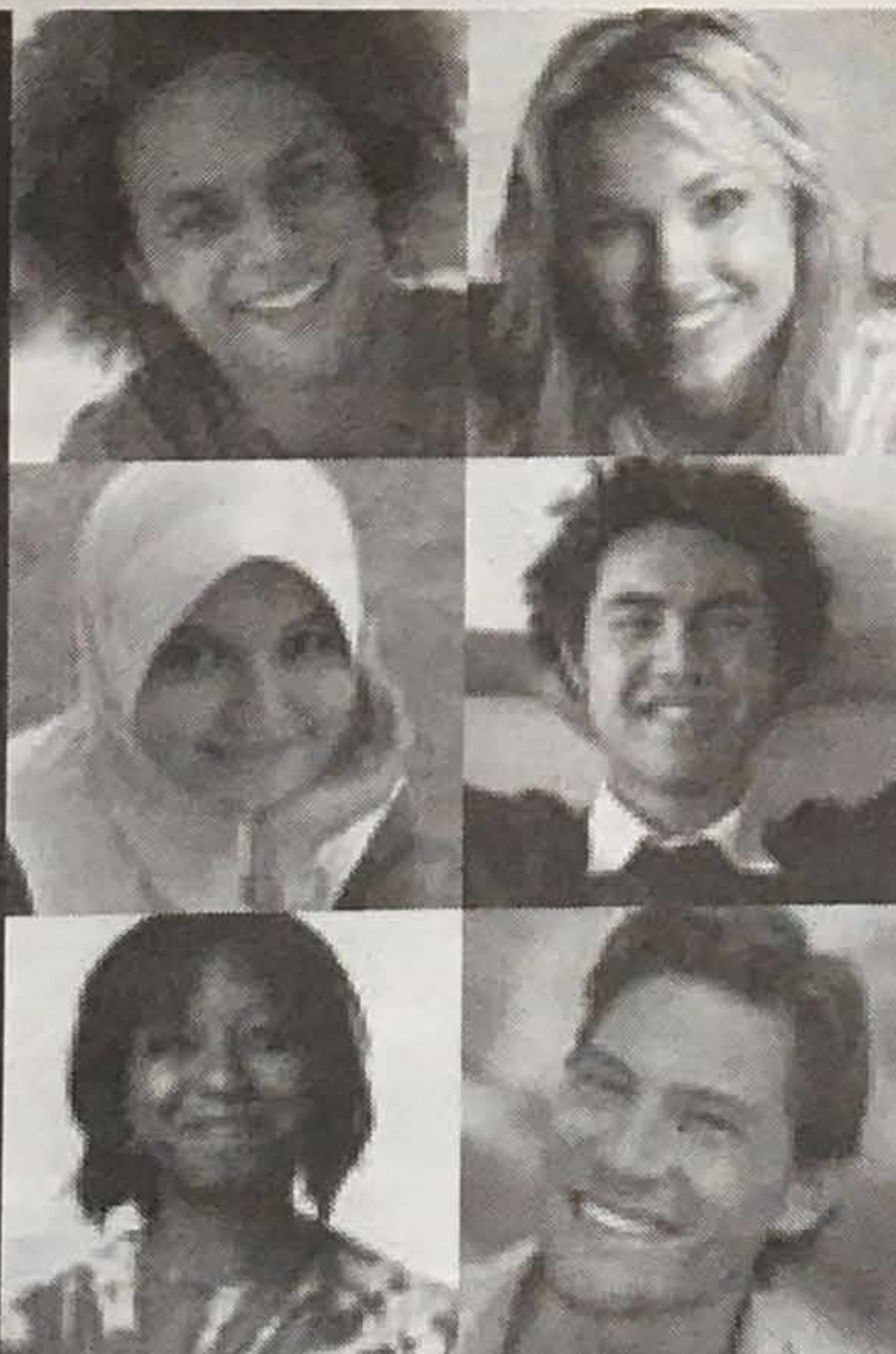


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Government announcement soon could

AMIDST the media frenzy which surrounds Dale Farm, it is easy to forget that last week's enforcement action stemmed from a planning dispute, writes Chris Richards.

Basildon Borough Council says the site is green belt. The travellers contend that it was nothing more than a scrapyard when they started moving in after 1996.

They own the land but don't

have planning permission from the council to be there.

All this, it must be remembered, comes against a backdrop of a nationwide shortage of legal pitches for gypsies and travellers.

Authorised pitches

The beginning of this problem can, in part, be traced back to 1994, when Parliament passed the

Criminal Justice and Public Order Act.

This act removed from local authorities the need to provide authorised pitches for travellers and also gave police and councils power to move travellers on from the roadside, subject to certain welfare issues.

As a result, the number of illegal encampments across the country grew - and Dale Farm is a

Sept 23, 2011

A further extension is given to the injunction, preventing any action over the weekend. Caravans begin to move back on to the site

Sept 24, 2011

Settled residents of Crays Hill meet to air their grievances and frustrations about the lack of progress at Dale Farm

Sept 26, 2011

The injunction is extended yet again until Thursday, while the travellers say they also want a judicial review to begin

Sept 29, 2011

Travellers and the council return to the High Court for a judicial review which could postpone the clearance even further



FAMILY TIES: (l-r) Joanna McCarthy, Mary Ann McCarthy, Mariha McCarthy, Kathleen McCarthy, Mary Ann McCarthy, Nora Eagan and Nora McCarthy



GYPSY SUPPORT: Professor Thomas Acton OBE

'They like to travel but they like a home too'

Encampment is a sign of integration, claims expert

Sam Smith

sam.smith@gazettenews.co.uk

WHY are travellers at Dale Farm not travelling?

It is a question often aimed at the residents, many of whom have lived there for over ten years.

But the fact they have settled does not necessarily mean they do not travel, according to a local academic.

Professor Thomas Acton, professor of Romani Studies at the University of Greenwich in London, told the Gazette that Dale Farm represents a "stage in the modernisation of the Irish Traveller community".

"Dale Farm is a little ghetto where they can have a base," said Prof Acton, who lives in Warley. "Children can go to school and enter into the modern world without losing their identity."

"They don't want to lose the elements of their lifestyle that they prize."

Bricks and mortar

Prof Acton also shed some light on why travellers do not wish to live in bricks and mortar housing.

"They have never lived in houses. Their economic advantage is that they can move to the work and that creates a culture where mobility and living close to the sky are valued."

"I do know some gypsies who have moved into a house and they like it to be a bungalow with caravans out the back. Some of them actually prefer to sleep in the caravan," he said.

The argument that travellers no longer travel is also dismissed by the professor.

"Of course they travel. More than half of the families on the legal site are away travelling," he said.

"Many are away on work contracts in Europe, they will go where the work is."

"These are people who spend

half a year in the US or Germany working. The thing that ties them down most is education for their children."

"Dale Farm is a sign of integration," he said.

"Irish traveller culture is becoming more accessible to other

people. It is becoming a public culture. People are writing books about it, there are TV shows about it."

"An eviction will put things back to the way it was in the 1960s. It makes people hide. It would be a tremendous retrograde step."

My children will be dunces like me without schooling

Dale Farm travellers give their views on why they have settled.

Danny Gee, 37, has been living at Dale Farm for 14 years.

He said: "How can we travel when we won't be left alone. The police always move us on. If we could be left alone we would travel."

"Now what do they want? They want us back on the road. But where do we go? We want to stay here, we have to stay here."

"I have nine children, they are in school. If I take them out, they are going to grow up as a dunce like me. I can't read or write, who is going to come out and educate them?"

Fellow Dale Farm resident **John Lee, 38,** who has lived at the Crays Hill site for ten years, believes their children's education is the solution to breaking down the prejudices that travellers face.

He said: "If they leave us and let our children go to school, they are getting thoughts and learning about the local community. They become part of the community."

"When you go to the side of the road, that knowledge goes."



MY HOME: It is hoped large pictures of Dale Farm children will discourage bailiffs



PLEA: A gypsy's appeal

put an end to problem of illegal pitches

result of this. It's true that the travellers at Dale Farm broke the law and that Basildon Council was entitled to evict them.

Unfortunately, this will not solve the problem of travellers having nowhere to go - indeed, it will just move the problem somewhere else.

Yet there may now be some light at the end of the tunnel for travellers and their future.

The Department for Communities and Local Government has been consulting on changing its policy with regard to gypsies and travellers.

Announcement

And according to communities secretary Eric Pickles, the department will be "making an announcement very soon to tackle the problem that currently exists".

Mr Pickles, the MP for Brentwood and Ongar, believes that more legal pitches are needed in the UK, saying: "I think every authority accepts that that is the case."

He added: "We will be encouraging local authorities to sensibly allocate pitches and in Brentwood we have had a happy relationship with a number of traveller families over the years."

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